

Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education

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September 4, 2020

RE: Cost Saving Option - Piloting a Long Term Percentage of State Government Workforce Utilizing Telework

To Whom It May Concern:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the SCDD, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

The Council is aware of the significant deficit Alaska is facing and seeks to provide helpful cost savings ideas moving forward to best preserve the vital services system which allows Alaskans with developmental disabilities to live meaningful lives in their home community.

The Council recommends the State of Alaska consider exploring a pilot for a long term percentage of its state government workforce to utilize telework.

Possible advantages to long term telework for the state workforce includes:

- Universal Design concept which will benefit people with disabilities as well as those without
 - As we work through this pandemic, telework for many with disabilities who fall under the "high risk" population will be critical in maintaining employment while balancing health and safety needs.
- Per the State Exchange on Employment and Disability's (SEED) Telework Policy Brief (attached), public and private sector employers are reporting that telework can benefit organizations by:
 - Saving money by promoting management efficiencies and costs related to employee turnover and absenteeism;
 - Making organizations more resilient in response to emergencies;
 - Reducing real estate and energy costs, transit costs, and environmental impact;
 - Improving the quality of employee work-life; and
 - Increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Other states, even before the pandemic, were moving towards telework for significant percentages of their state workforce. The federal government has used telework as an established strategy which has had outcomes documented well including sizeable cost savings (<https://www.telework.gov/reports-studies/reports-to-congress/2019-report-to-congress.pdf>).

Utah Telework Efforts:

- Pilot Program data (July 2019)
 - Productivity went up by more than 20% among the 136 employees who participated in the program.
Prevented 273 pounds of carbon dioxide from going into the atmosphere
 - The initiative would also lower the demand for state office space by about 63,900 square feet
 - Data for the whole state is currently being collected as the plan is now to target 2,555 state government workers, or 30 percent of eligible employees, and enroll them in teleworking over the next 18 months.¹

Tennessee Telework Efforts:

- 60 percent of managers say employees have improved productivity
- 80 percent of employees say they have a better work-life balance
- Participating agencies have recorded a 37 percent reduction in sick leave use
- The state estimates that the average employee is saving \$1,800 a year on gas.
- By the end of this fiscal year, Tennessee says it will have likely cut its real-estate rental costs by \$6.5 million
- Next year, it plans to sell one of its downtown Nashville office buildings, which is no longer needed. That could give the state an extra \$40 to \$60 million.²

The Council views telework as an opportunity. It is an opportunity to keep those in our “high risk” populations as safe as possible, while at the same time better enabling state employment for people with disabilities, as well as importantly serving as a cost savings strategy for the long term. The Council stands ready to assist the State with exploration of this possible cost savings strategy.

Respectfully,

Executive Committee

¹ References:

• <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2019/07/08/state-utah-is-ready-let/>
• <https://www.deseret.com/2019/7/8/8935898/utah-s-pilot-teleworking-program-for-state-workers-saving-time-money-emissions-and-stress#marilee-richins-deputy-director-of-the-department-of-administrative-services-points-out-different-areas-during-a-tour-with-lt-gov-spencer-cox-on-monday-july-8-2019-of-a-shared-office-space-idea-at-the-state-office-building-in-salt-lake-city>

² Reference: <https://www.governing.com/topics/workforce/gov-tennessee-government-telework.html>